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ABSTRACT

Project VOICE tutoring service at the Washington Technical Institute (WTI) sent an eight-item evaluation questionnaire to students who had used its tutoring service in 1970. The survey was designed to assess the effectiveness of the service from the students' point of view and discover new ways to strengthen the program. Two hundred questionnaires were distributed and only 58 were returned completed. Respondents represented all departments at WTI and were mostly tutored in mathematics, reading skills or both. A summary and evaluation of each item of the questionnaire as well as results are reported. An overview and implications of the questionnaire findings are presented. (MJM)

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PROJECT VOICE

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Project VOICE

Voluntary Opportunities for Inspiring
Coordinators of Education
Report on:
Washington Technical Institute
Students' Evaluation of the
VOICE Tutorial Service
1971

Project VOICE tutoring service at WTI sent an eight item evaluation questionnaire to students who had used its tutoring service in 1971. This population included those students who dropped out or were "no-shows" for their tutoring appointments after one or more meetings and those who were tutored regularly.

The purpose of the survey was to assess the effectiveness of the service from the students' point of view and to discover new ways to strengthen the program through their suggestions.

It was felt that those students who had been tutored once or more than once, rather than those who had signed up but never been tutored, would be qualified to answer the eight items honestly and conscientiously. It was assumed that these raters would be willing to take the trouble to fill out the survey and return it.

Many difficulties were encountered trying to get the evaluations to the students. It was decided that the students were in a better position to answer these questions after they had participated in the program for a month or longer. As a result, evaluations were distributed at the end of each quarter. By this time many students had dropped out of WTI, had moved and left no forwarding addresses, were not at previously reported phone numbers, or for some reason did not bother to fill out the forms or return them. Some evaluation blanks were sent by mail, some through the tutors and others given out to the students through the VOICE office. The percentage of returned evaluations sent by mail was negligible while time consuming and expensive. The sending of evaluations by mail was discontinued by the summer quarter.

By December 1971, 43 tutees had returned completed forms and 15 tutees in a special tutorial workshop had returned forms for a total of 58 replies. This number was considered a poor response to the over 200 questionnaires distributed. At the same time the high percentage of agreement among those who did respond was considered significant. The students who responded represent all departments at WTI and were mostly tutored in Mathematics, Reading skills or both.

The questionnaire was anonymous. There seemed to be an unwillingness on the part of WTI students to take the necessary time and effort to complete the survey. The accompanying instructions were thought to be simple and the eight items were neither overly elaborate nor time consuming to complete. It was decided that the raters were not "sold" and the importance of their judgement or the possibility that any changes might be instituted in the program because of them had been made. It is important to realize that in some cases the making of such reports might be a real nuisance to the student. It is recommended that coordinators explore ways to "sell" the students on the importance of devoting a few minutes to evaluate the program so that through their judgement the program might be developed most effectively.

Project VOICE

Question No. 1. How did you get involved in the program?

Heard about it from another student
Through your advisor
Suggested by a member of the faculty
Read about it
Other_____

Responses	Percentage of total
8 Heard about it through another student	13 %
12 Through your advisor	21 %
16 Suggested by a member of the faculty	27 %
17 Read about it	29 %
5 Other	10 %

Summary and evaluation of item 1

The highest percentage of responses indicates that the tutorial program was best advertised to the students through reading about it (29 %), the faculty (27 %), and advisors (21 %), were about equally effective in bringing students into the program. These three sources account for 77 % of the tutees. It would appear that the maintenance of close communication through notices, meetings and regular reports to the faculty and Developmental Advisers plus campus-wide advertisement of the tutorial program through letters to student government, flyers, notices and prominent displays before, during and shortly after registration have begun to pay dividends.

Continued efforts on the part of the coordinators are needed to keep the Developmental Advisers and faculty aware of the services we can provide. There is a ripe field for expansion of our services if department heads are still aware that a free tutorial program exists at WTI.

Question No. 2. Based on your experience would you advise other students to take advantage of this tutorial service?

Responses	Percentage of total
56 Yes	96.6
2 No	3.4

Summary and evaluation of item 2

There was almost total agreement on the part of the students that they would advise other students to use the tutorial service. This would indicate a strong vote of confidence not only in the academic expertise of the tutors but in their abilities to establish successful communication so that a good learning situation existed.

It can be inferred that in the opinion of the tutees the tutorial service has helped them achieve academic progress so that it can be recommended to help other students who may also be experiencing academic difficulty.

Question No. 3. Do you plan to use our tutoring program next quarter?

Responses	Percentage of total
46 Yes	79
6 No	11
4 Maybe (write in)	6.6
2 Did not answer	3.4

Summary and evaluation of item 3

Seventy-nine per cent of the students indicated they would be seeking tutoring service in the next quarter. This large percentage of returnees was borne out by the steady increase in the number of student applications received during the year. It can be taken as an indication to the coordinators that many new volunteer tutors must be recruited to meet the steadily increasing demand. With the enlargement of WTI student body this demand can be expected to continue.

If the tutorial service is to function efficiently in the quarters to come coordinators must forsee the ever increasing needs for classroom space, instructional materials as well as volunteer tutors.

Question No. 4. How do you prefer to be tutored?

Individually
Two to four students
Workshops

Responses	Percentage of total
26 individually	45
14 2-4 students	24.3
10 workshops	17.3
3 no answer	5
2 checked all 3 responses	3.4
3 checked individually and workshops	5

Summary and evaluation of item 4

There does not seem to be agreement on any one number of tutees for the best tutorial situation. There were many advocates for each class size. Some references indicated individual tutoring (45%). Over 8% of the students seemed to think a variety of class sizes could meet their needs equally well.

This response was taken to indicate that there is no one ideal class size for a good tutorial learning situation to exist. It could further be hypothesized that in some instances the presence of a peer group might further the learning process, while a large per cent want individual attention.

It would seem that each applicant's requirements be assessed so that those whose needs can best be met in a one-to-one teaching situation can be so placed. On the other hand students with similar problems in the same content areas can benefit from peer interaction and be better served in small groups or workshops.

It is recommended that class size remain a very flexible consideration readily adapted to the ever changing requirements of the tutees and geared to the preference of the individual tutors.

Question No. 5. Do you feel you have benefited in your other courses by a carry-over of the mathematics or reading-writing skills you learned in the tutorial program?

Responses	Percentage of total
53 Yes	91.6
2 No	3.4
3 No answer	5

Summary and evaluation of item 5

An impressive 91.6 of the tutees seemed to feel there tutoring experience had up-graded their over all academic abilities and that there was a definite carry-over of these new skills into all areas of their academic life.

It is assumed that the 5% who did not answer this question either did not know or were unsure if this was true in their own cases. The low percentage of 3.4 would indicate that there were very few instances in which the tutees felt they had not experienced some overall benefit from their tutorial sessions.

It would seem that the remedial effectiveness of the tutorial services so far provided at WTI has had a far reaching effect on basic mathematics and reading skills of the students involved.

Question No. 6. Were you satisfied that your tutor was able to help you?

Responses	Percentage of total
50 Yes	86.6
2 No	3.4
6 no answer	10

Summary and evaluation of item 6

A preponderance of the students (86.6) stated that their tutors were able to help them. From this response it can be inferred that the volunteer tutors at WTI were well qualified to teach the students in the subject areas needed. The coordinator has the responsibility of screening the tutors so that the tutor does possess the necessary academic qualifications to be able to help the tutee. This was apparently the case at WTI. It can be hypothesized that tutors who are themselves professionals in their fields can provide a very stimulating learning experience for the vocationally oriented students at WTI. Hence a computer programmer makes a most efficient tutor for a student experiencing difficulty in vocabulary in a course in computer programing. A registered nurse working in a local hospital provided highly qualified assistance to students from the WTI Department of Nursing. And so it goes, as the responses to their item would indicate such tutors can provide a real service to WTI students.

Question No. 7. Did you keep most of your appointments with your tutor?

Responses	Percentage of total
46 Yes	79.3
5 No	9
6 No answer	10
1 sometimes	1.7

Summary and evaluation of item 7

Seventy-nine and three-tenths percent of the students who returned their evaluation sheets indicated they did keep most of their appointments regularly. It also can be assumed from the difficulties involved getting questionnaires to the students, as well as getting replies back that those students who answered the questionnaires, were most likely to show up for tutoring on a regular basis. The special student population who responded to the questionnaire probably showed the results in favor of good attendance. Reports from the tutors would indicate that actually about 50% of the students did not keep their appointments regularly. Some students showed up only once and some never showed up at all. In another report prepared for the Department of Business Technology 28 students were tutored in an Introduction to Business Course. At the conclusion of the Quarter it was found that 8 students had withdrawn or were "no shows" so that there were actually only 20 students in the class. Attendance at the tutorial sessions averaged under 50% according to the 3 tutors involved.

Apparently the tutors' reports and the special class report just described were probably more accurate indicators of the students who kept most of their appointments with their tutors than the 79.3 attendance reported in this survey. The ambiguity noted between these statistics was probably a result of the specially motivated student population who answered the survey.

Question No. 8. How could the Program be strengthened?

This was the only non-limited item in the survey. It required an individual subjective judgement of the program. Just over 50% of the students who answered the questionnaire made some comment in response to this question.

Responses

"Should teach students individually rather than with others not necessarily on same level."

"Put more stress on your present methods and increase volume of present program."

"Have more tutors."

"Bring in course on slide rule."

"If possible let students come more often."

"Have tutor talk to Mathematics teacher."

"Would like to take course every day."

"More tutor hours."

"More advertising about tutoring on the campus."

"By letting pupils know about program. Most students I told about this program never knew it existed."

"If more students take advantage of it, it would help tutors understand our needs."

"I do not know."

"I think it's just right."

"By teachers having books and more people taking tutoring."

"If possible a machine to help improve reading skills."

"Do not know. The program is good."

"Mathematics tutoring of 2-4 students should be students in same math class using same books, same problems."

"Tutor very helpful. I passed GED test. Program is very good just try it for yourself."

"No way."

Some definite trends were noticed in the judgements offered by the students in response to this item. One was that the program could be strengthened by more publicity. As one student wrote "... most students I told about this program never knew it existed." It is recommended that Coordinators be responsible for launching a publicity drive before each quarter so that the students will be aware that a free tutorial service exists at WTI to help them. It is also recommended that every faculty member receive a memo to this effect at the beginning of each quarter. Posters should be prominently displayed in public areas such as the Library, Falcon Inn, and on department bulletin boards announcing the tutorial service.

It is further recommended that every attempt be made to procure in advance a table at registration with large signs advertising a free tutorial service. During student orientation students who think they might benefit from this extra help should be urged to fill out a tutoring application form at registration. In this way the coordinator can make some estimate of the probable number of students and recruit the necessary number of volunteer tutors to serve them most effectively.

Another comment frequently noted seemed to indicate that many students would like to be tutored more often. Such comments as "if possible let students come more often" and "have more tutor hours" were indicators that many tutees felt they needed more than the usual one or two tutoring appointments per week that were the norm. This might involve the services of an increasing number of tutors. On the other hand several regularly scheduled tutoring classes three days a week might be instituted in specific subject areas for which there was a large demand, i.e. basic math and technical math. These classes as well as the Saturday Workshops could afford the student the opportunity to be tutored four or more days a week.

The comments that instructional materials might be in short supply in some instances and that special teaching machine lessons might be developed for the students were considered valid suggestions. Improvements should be instigated in these areas. Every effort was made to get teachers texts from the mathematics and engineering departments as well as economic texts, nursing texts etc... There was some ambiguity as to who should be expected to bear the responsibility for the expense of the materials, whether it should be the students, the departments involved, or Project VOICE. The coordinators were often able to get books and materials for the tutors from all three of these sources. However, it is strongly recommended that this problem be resolved so that some definite precedent and procedure will be established. Some specifically designated funds or agency should be available to the coordinator for the purpose of procuring the necessary instructional materials needed by the tutors.

Programmed materials in teaching conversational English were borrowed from Project Adelante and taped by the Media Center for the tutoring service. The accompanying programmed texts for these tapes were also borrowed from Project Adelante. These were the only audio-visual aides especially designed for some students at the request of certain tutors. However all of the programmed materials at the Media Center were made available to the tutors. Many tutors were able to guide their students to Media Center materials that could help them with their learning difficulties. It is recommended that Coordinators acquaint all the tutors, new and old, with the Media Center and the availability of its services to themselves and their tutees.

Several students indicated some of the small class grouping had not been

homogeneous. For example, "... math tutoring of 2-4 students should be students in same math class using same books with same problems" and "teaching students individually rather than with others not necessarily with same problems." From these comments it can be deduced that in some instances students who did not have similar needs were grouped together. It is recommended that Coordinators interview the students more carefully, in person or by phone, to determine the exact level of their academic needs. Only when two or more students indicate similar needs should they be grouped together. This is never an easy determination to make and the possibility of error will continue to exist. With this consideration in mind it is recommended that students be told that scheduling is very flexible and when one tutoring situation does not meet their needs another arrangement can be made upon request. Had this been done the student who wrote "bring in course in slide rule" might have asked the Coordinator for a tutor who could provide help in this area.

Many of the observations indicated that the majority of the tutees had been well satisfied with the tutorial service provided "I think it's just right", "put more stress on your present method", "program is good", and the happy comment from the student who said "tutor very helpful I passed GED test. Program is very good just try it for yourself."